



Commandant's NOTE

MAJOR GENERAL CARL F. ERNST Chief of Infantry

THE FUTURE OF THE INFANTRY IN FORCE XXI

Americans in 1950 rediscovered something that since Hiroshima they had forgotten: you may fly over a land forever; you may bomb it, atomize it, pulverize it and wipe it clean of life—but if you desire to defend it, protect it, and keep it for civilization, you must do this on the ground, the way the Roman legions did, by putting your young men into the mud.

These words are as relevant today as when T.R. Fehrenbach penned them in *This Kind of War—A Study in Unpreparedness*, and we would do well to keep them in mind as we approach the challenges of the next century.

The future role of the Infantryman is clear: He—and the skills he employs—will remain the keystone of force projection for a long time to come. In today's world, nations continually face threats to their stability and national interests, and the United States is no exception. The breakup of the Soviet Union—with the subsequent perceived reduction in the threat it had posed—has in turn led to reductions in the armed forces of some NATO members. The monolithic threat of the Soviet Union has been supplanted by smaller but more numerous, varied, and often less predictable ones. For the first time, many Third World states and smaller entities now have access to advanced night vision, armor, antiarmor, air defense, and mass destruction technologies, in addition to considerable amounts of low-tech arms and munitions. These are some of the challenges that our Army will face as we enter the next millennium, and in this issue's Commandant's Note I want to discuss the role of our Infantry as we consider the prospects of deploying forces in support of our national interests in the year 2000 and beyond.

Among the less-developed armies of the world, the bulk

of their combat power is concentrated in light Infantry forces, for these can most easily be sustained in their regional environments and without unduly draining their already limited resources. To an ever-increasing extent, we are also likely to encounter concentrations of such forces in and around urban areas as populations are drawn to cities in search of a secure economic and political infrastructure. Add to this the pervasive potential for the resurgence of traditional rivalries and internal conflicts—such as we have already seen in the breakup of Yugoslavia, in Somalia, in Haiti, and in Rwanda. The challenge of restoring and maintaining stability means that we must increase emphasis on our ability to operate in urban environments, and to be prepared to address a more diverse array of adversaries than we have encountered before.

The advantages in flexibility, agility, maneuverability, and firepower that have enabled the combined arms team to execute bold maneuver that led to decisive victory in Panama and Desert Storm will be degraded in the close fight in built-up areas. Urban combat will be largely an Infantry fight, but will require the support of the combined arms team. The Infantry must be prepared to force our way in, destroy the enemy, and clear streets, buildings, and areas. That is why we must continue to maintain our lead in own-the-night technologies, Soldier systems—including state of the art weapons, the tactics and techniques of combat in built-up areas, and prevention of fratricide and noncombatant casualties and collateral damage.

Forced entry (“GRUNTSpeak”: Deploy with 18 hours notice, anywhere in the world, kick in the door, kick in their teeth, establish a lodgement, flow in combined arms reinforcements and sustain the mission as long as necessary) has wider implications as well. Even in theaters

that have the ports and airfields to support our rapid deployment, not all will have the necessary degree of security and be stable enough to let us land unopposed. That is why we must continue to organize, train, and equip Ranger, airborne, and air assault Infantry units to seize and hold the airfields, ports, and other facilities essential for the rapid insertion of follow-on forces—tanks, mechanized Infantry, and the rest of the combined arms and services team.

The scope of operations for the Infantry, including stability and support operations, has broadened, and we must train and equip the entire force to accomplish both its old and new missions. Our Infantry will operate as light, airborne, air assault, Ranger, and mechanized forces across the full spectrum of land warfare, to seize, hold, and dominate the 21st century battlefield under all rules of engagement. As always, this will be accomplished primarily through close combat, simply because this—and only this—can bring about the defeat of an enemy or the required end state of stability and support operations.

Force XXI embraces a number of exciting concepts that will ensure our military preeminence as we enter the next century, such as the impact of information systems and the critical battle dynamics that we must learn to recognize and exploit. The foundation of success, however, lies in the patterns of operations that will guide our efforts in the immediate future and long term. These patterns are not new concepts; indeed they have been integral elements of our planning and doctrinal considerations for some time. They are:

Project the Force—Infantry-led early/forceable entry, followed by mechanized Infantry with armor.

Protect the Force—Infantry will continue to provide the basis for securing the lodgement.

Gain Information Dominance—Infantry reconnaissance from corps long-range surveillance companies (LRSCs), division long-range surveillance detachments (LRSDs), battalion reconnaissance platoons, and reconnaissance by all types of infantry squads/platoons.

Shape the Battlespace—Seizing or securing key and decisive terrain; defending same to enable offensive maneuver; raiding to destroy key targets/nodes, among other

infantry enabling missions.

Execute Dominant Maneuver—While this calls to mind the infantry-tank-field artillery team in the decisive close fight, supported by the rest of the combined arms team, it has wide and more traditional implications as well. Just as Fehrenbach has pointed out, ultimate victory will go to the nation that demonstrates the willingness to put its soldiers on the ground, to meet the adversary eye-to-eye, and to force the issue. Rome maintained a sustained peace in her area of interest for over two centuries through the implied—and, when necessary, applied—might of her legions. Little has changed in that regard, and our ability to dominate any area of operations will be the key to success, both in the close fight and in non-traditional missions.

These principles have Army-wide relevance, but they have particular significance for the Infantry. Our branch has historically been the first to take the fight to the enemy, and take it to him up close and personal. These patterns of operations will guide us as we continue to train, field, and sustain the Infantrymen who will be the centerpiece of a force projection Army that can swiftly deploy, deliver the knockout punch, and return to train for its next mission.

The March-April 1997 Brigade Advanced Warfighting Experiment included one light Infantry battalion (1st Battalion, 5th Infantry, 25th Infantry Division, Fort Lewis) and one mech battalion (1st Battalion, 22d Infantry, 4th Infantry Division, Fort Hood). The 1-5 was equipped with Javelin, own-the-night, and the 120mm mortar with the modular fire control system, all clear winners making light Infantry more than a match for the OPFOR. The 1-22 was organized with the 2x9+5 (two 9-man squads plus two machinegun teams per platoon) and the platoons were full. Mechanized Infantry without Javelin and own-the-night kit (mechanized Infantry is scheduled to get both) but with real strength proved that they can infiltrate early, gain a foothold or defend dismounted to both deny ground and shape a mobile fight.

Both of these battalions did us all proud!

Hooah!